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NEARBY



SP national executive to meet today
LUCKNOW
The Samajwadi Party's national executive committee will meet here on Saturday to deliberate on various political issues, including the Assembly elections to be held in 2022. This will be the first national executive of the party after a dismal show in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav is likely to attend the meeting presided over by party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

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COVID-19 cases hit 82, second patient dies

68-year-old woman succumbs in Delhi; several States start containment efforts

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI
India reported its second COVID-19 death on Friday, with a 68-year-old woman from west Delhi succumbing to the infection at the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, while the number of positive cases touched 82.

With the country in the second stage of transmission of the disease, countrywide containment efforts were launched. Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha announced the closure of schools, colleges, malls and theatres and cancellation of public events till March 31, while Haryana ordered a ban on religious gatherings and festivals.

"The lockdown that India is currently under is absolutely necessary. India has a

30-day window to halt the beginning of community transmission of COVID-19 cases. The time to act is now. While there is no cause for panic, aggressive measures can also reverse community transmission, if it happens. It's time that we all worked together to make use of the opportunity that we have right now," said Balram Bhargava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

On Friday, fresh cases were reported from Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala. Three persons in Thiruvananthapuram district tested positive, taking the total number in the second wave of infection to 19 in Kerala.

Delhi-NCR reported yet another positive case of a 46-



Back home: Indians, who were stuck in the Iranian city of Qom, being brought to Mumbai on Friday.

year-old man from Greater Noida, with travel history to Italy and Switzerland. More than 700 people working in his leather company have been put under surveillance, Gautam Buddha Nagar Chief Medical Officer Anurag Bhargava told reporters.

Tech giant Google confirmed that an employee of its Bengaluru office, who had returned from Greece, was

diagnosed with COVID-19. Forty-four Indians, who returned to Mumbai from Iran, were shifted to a 100-bed quarantine facility set up by the Western Naval Command in suburban Ghatkopar, a defence release said.

IPL postponed, ODIs cancelled

The BCCI on Friday postponed the start of Indian Premier League (IPL) from March 29 to April 15 following the COVID-19 scare. The remaining two ODIs between India and South Africa, scheduled to be held in Lucknow and Kolkata, have been cancelled.

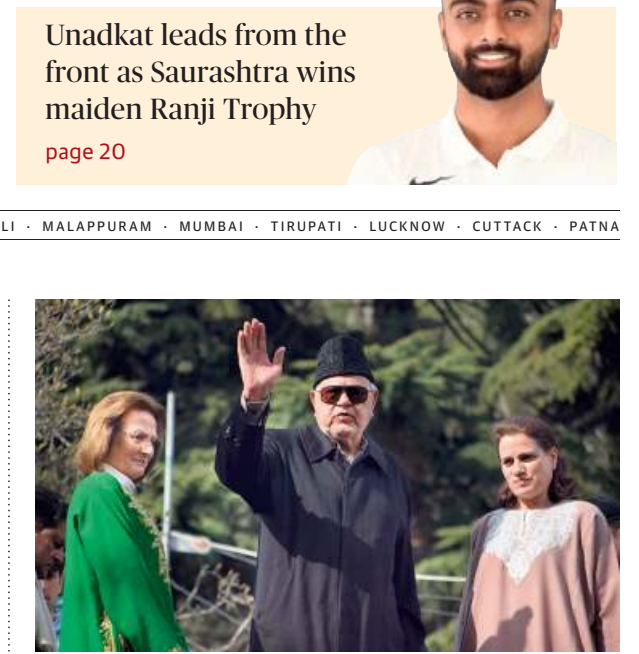
PM calls for SAARC strategy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called for a videoconference of SAARC leaders to discuss a common strategy to tackle COVID-19. All leaders of the grouping, except Pakistan's Imran Khan, welcomed the suggestion.

Farooq set free after 7 months of detention

Ex-CM seeks release of other J&K leaders

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR
In a significant step to allow the resumption of regional politics, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday released National Conference (NC) president and MP Farooq Abdullah, 82, by revoking his detention under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA). Dr. Abdullah, who was in detention for over seven months, said his "freedom is incomplete till other detained leaders are released". Dr. Abdullah has become the first of the three incarcerated former Chief Ministers to be set free since the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's autonomous status on August 5 last. NC vice-president Omar Abdullah and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti remain in de-



Out at last: Farooq Abdullah, with his wife and daughter, at his home in Srinagar on Friday.

Shaheen Bagh stir will go on till CAA is revoked

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI
Nearly three months since they began their protest against the amended citizenship law, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), some of the women protesters at Shaheen Bagh said on Friday

that the movement will continue till the law is revoked. During a late night press briefing, the protesters said that the CAA was unconstitutional. They also said that the recent riots in Delhi were a "targeted attack on a single community".

Delhi gov't bans sports events till further orders

DMs, SDMs told to enforce COVID-19 directives

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
The Delhi government on Friday banned all sports events and activities in the city that are likely to register an attendance of over 200 people in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing a press conference, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that the government has decided that all sports activities in Delhi such as seminars, conferences and events which are in the nature of public gatherings would not be allowed. Asked if the popular Indian Premier League cricket tournament would be allowed with just players and empty stands, Mr. Sisodia said, "We

have banned all sports-related gatherings, but if the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) wants to conduct it in a new format, it is up to them." "All sports gatherings (including IPL)/conferences/seminars beyond 200 people are prohibited in NCT of Delhi for the purpose of prevention and control of the outbreak of epidemic disease namely COVID-19," an order issued by the Delhi government read.

Mr. Sisodia said that the ban would remain in force until further orders. "We have told all DMs (District Magistrates) and SDMs (Sub Divisional Magistrates) to follow all orders from the Health Department on coronavirus strictly and take action if anyone is violating it," he said.

Delhi Assembly passes resolution against NPR, NRC

If the Centre insists, NPR exercise should be carried out in 2010 format, says AAP Minister Gopal Rai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Delhi Assembly on Friday passed a resolution against the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) at a special session here.

By conducting the NPR exercise across the nation, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged during his address, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government was attempting to "divert" the attention of people from "the real issues" being faced by the country such as unemployment and economic crises.



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal arrives at the Delhi Assembly in New Delhi on Friday.

'No birth certificate'
Mr. Kejriwal's statement came in the wake of Cabinet Minister Gopal Rai moving a resolution against the NPR in the State Assembly. Mr. Rai further said that if the Centre insists, the NPR process should be carried out

in accordance with the 2010 format. During the debate on the resolution, Mr. Kejriwal asked for a show of hands to ascertain how many legislators present in the House had birth certificates issued by government agencies; out of the 70-

member Assembly, 61 did not have one. "Me, my wife, and my parents, we do not possess the birth certificate issued by the municipality... will the Central government send the four family members, including the Delhi Chief Minister, to a de-

retention centre? None of the Delhi Cabinet Ministers have the birth certificate, will the whole Cabinet be sent to detention centres?" said Mr. Kejriwal. "I want to know how many of the [Union] Cabinet Ministers and MPs have the birth certificate. Most of the CMs do not have it," he said further. **'The real issues'** "The real issues right now should be unemployment and economy... the Centre might bring forth the claim that all these three things are different, but the Union Home Minister has linked them himself by telling the people to understand the chronology," he said. "The Home Minister said that first is CAA, then NPR, and then NRC." In this process, Mr. Kejriwal alleged, Indian Hindus had the most to lose: if one was a Muslim and did not have pap-

ers, an individual would "directly land into the detention centre"; if one was a Hindu from Pakistan then the government would "make your papers"; but if one was a Hindu from India and did not have papers, the individual concerned would still "be sent to the detention camps". As many as 11 Indian States, he said, had passed a resolution against the NRC and the NPR and many of these such as Bihar and Tamil Nadu were ruled by parties that are in alliance with the BJP. "I will request the Central government to not bring the NPR and the NRC because it will be of no good to our country," the Chief Minister said. The eight-member Opposition sought to condemn what it alleged was a "deliberate attempt" to spread "doubts and misgivings" about a "well-intentioned move" of the Central government.

Hold floor test, Nath tells Governor

The very edifice of democracy is in danger: M.P. Chief Minister

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Friday requested Governor Lalji Tandon to hold a floor test in the Assembly session starting from March 16, on a date fixed by the Speaker. He also asked the Governor to use his "good offices with the Union Home Minister" to ensure the release of 19 MLAs "held captive" in Bengaluru.

In a letter submitted to Mr. Tandon at the Raj Bhawan here, Mr. Nath said, "We expect that the enquiry on the resignations submitted by the BJP, allegedly of the captive Congress MLAs, is completed early." Resignations of 19 of the 22 rebel MLAs were conveyed by former BJP Minister Bhubendra Singh from a Bengaluru resort to the Speaker on Tuesday. So far,



Kamal Nath addressing journalists after meeting Governor Lalji Tandon in Bhopal on Friday.

the Speaker has served notice on 13 of them, asking them to appear before him and attest to having resigned of their own accord. In these disturbing circumstances, wrote Mr. Nath, the very edifice of democracy was in danger. "Trust of a transparent democratic process seems lost. It merits full investigation and enquiry, so that persons responsible for derailing the democratic insti-

tutional process are exposed and punished," he said. They would not leave any stone unturned to "ensure the triumph of democracy and the legislative process, to uphold the Constitution and the values enshrined therein," Mr. Nath assured the people. In the letter with the subject, 'Horse trading of MLAs by the Bharatiya Janata Party', Mr. Nath detailed instances of "unethical and illegal acts of the BJP". Pointing to the first attempt on the intervening night of March 3 and 4, he said the "midnight leading to whisking away of MLAs to Bengaluru is in public domain."

U.P. clears Ordinance for recovery of damages

Decision comes a day after SC did not stay HC order to remove hoardings

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW
The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government on Friday gave its approval to an Ordinance for the recovery of damage to public and private property during protests. U.P. Finance Minister Suresh Khanna announced the decision of the State Cabinet, which gave its consent to the U.P. Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020.



Lucknow hoardings show those who have to pay compensation.

specifics would be known when the "niyamawali" or manual of rules for it is released. **'Honouring the court'** Sidharth Nath Singh, U.P. government spokesperson, said the State had brought the Ordinance in compliance with the Supreme Court's observations. "We are honouring the court. The court said there must be an Act on this," he said, adding that earlier recovery of damages was covered under a government order but now it would be under a law.

Mr. Khanna said the Ordinance was based on the 2007 order by the apex court in criminal writ petitions 73 and 77 that a "strong law" was needed to deal with the damage to public and private property during political protests and demonstrations. Without giving any further details, Mr. Khanna said the

The State government's decision comes at a time when it has - in a controversial move - put up several hoardings in Lucknow identifying those accused of violence during the protests against the CAA in December last. Terming it an "unwarranted interference in privacy" of people and a violation of Article 21 of the Constitution, the Allahabad High Court had on Monday directed the Lucknow administration to remove the 'name and shame' roadside hoardings. However, the State approached the apex court through a special leave petition against the decision, following which the court referred the appeal to a larger Bench. The total damage listed in the hoardings amounts to ₹1.55 crore. As many as 57 persons have been identified in the hoardings.

Pehlu Khan case: minor convicts sent to special home

Another juvenile aged over 16 at the time is facing trial in a court in Alwar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR
Two minors convicted of participating in the murder of dairy farmer Pehlu Khan as members of a mob of cow vigilantes in 2017 were on Friday sent by Alwar's Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) to a special home for three years. Six persons accused of having led the attack were acquitted by a sessions court in August last year. The convicts, who were minors when they committed the crime, are in the age group of 18-21 now. They are likely to be shifted to a special home on the Central Jail premises in Jaipur.



Pehlu Khan

Video footage
The JJB, headed by Principal Magistrate Sarita Dhakad, had last week held the two minors guilty under Sections 302 (murder), 147 (rioting), 323 (voluntarily caus-

ing hurt) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the Indian Penal Code. The video footage of the crime scene, which showed the presence of the two in the mob, and other evidence formed the grounds of the JJB's judgment. Another juvenile, who was older than 16 years at the time, is facing trial as an accused in a court in Alwar, where his case was transferred because of the offence being covered in the

category of heinous crimes. Khan, 55, a dairy farmer from Haryana's Nuh district, his two sons and a few others were waylaid by self-styled cow vigilantes near Behror on the Jaipur-Delhi National Highway on April 1, 2017, and thrashed on suspicion that they were smuggling cows for slaughter. Khan succumbed to his injuries two days later in a hospital. The sentence was handed down under Section 18(1)(g) of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, providing that a child found to be in conflict with law may be sent to a special home for a maximum period of three years for getting reformatory services, including education, skill development, counselling, behaviour modification therapy and psychiatric support. The Alwar sessions court had acquitted six accused in the case on August 14, 2019, giving them the benefit of the doubt on the basis of the police probe. Those let off by the court were Vipin Yadav, Kalu Ram, Dayanand, Ravindra Kumar, Yogesh Kumar and Bheem Rath. **Appeal in High Court** The State government filed an appeal in the Rajasthan High Court against the sessions court verdict after a Special Investigation Team pointed out loopholes in the probe conducted earlier by four investigating officers. The High Court had earlier quashed the case of illegal transport of cattle for slaughter against Khan, his sons and the owner of the pick-up truck in which they were travelling. The court had ruled that Khan had purchased the animals for dairy and not slaughter.